

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: PFOR FI

SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF THE " MILLHOUSE" CASE

REF: HELSINKI 949

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID GOVERNMENT WAS NOT AWARE OF ANTI- AMERICAN AND ANTI- NIXON BROADCASTING DURING 25 TH ANNIVERSARY OF FINNISH- SOVIET FRIENDSHIP PACT. FOREIGN MINISTER LESS THAN CANDID. SHOWING OF " MILLHOUSE" SCHEDULED FOR PACT ANNIVERSARY WAS POSTPONED AFTER EMBASSY CONTACTED FOREIGN MINISTRY. FOREIGN MINISTER HAS PRIVATELY INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT HE FEELS RADIO AND TV ARE BIASED. EMBASSY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN REDRESS HAVE BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THIS YEAR THAN PREVIOUSLY, AND RECENTLY BEGUN DIALOGUE BETWEEN MISSION AND BROADCASTING OFFICIALS HOLDS PROMISE OF FURTHER IMPROVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT THIS WEEK ABOUT ANTI- AMERICAN BROADCASTING, PARTICULARLY DURING THE EARLY APRIL CELEBRATIONS OF THE 25 TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINNISH- SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY, FOREIGN MINISTER AHTI KARJALAINEN SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT AWARE THAT THE

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FINNISH RADIO AND TV HAD BROADCAST SUCH PROGRAMS WHICH WERE ALLEGED BY THE QUESTIONER TO HAVE BEEN INSULTING TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. KARJALAINEN ALSO STRESSED THAT THE BROADCASTING ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD, THE SUPREME BODY WHICH CONTROLS PROGRAMMING, IS ELECTED BY AND RESPONSIBLE TO THE PARLIAMENT, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT INTERFERE WITH INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS RESPONDING TO A QUESTION BY CONSERVATIVE SWEDISH PARTY MP GEORG C. EHRNRÖÖTH.

3. KARJALAINEN WAS BEING LESS THAN CANDID. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, THE TV HAD SCHEDULED THE SHOWING OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM " MILLHOUSE", UNDENIABLY AN AFFRONT TO THE PRESIDENT, ON APRIL 6, THE VERY ANNIVERSARY DAY OF THE FINNISH- SOVIET TREATY. WHEN THE EMBASSY CALLED THIS FACT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THE PROGRAM WAS POSTPONED UNTIL APRIL 27. THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE OF THE MATTER BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT URGED THE TV TO CANCEL THE SCREENING ON APRIL 6. KARJALAINEN ALSO DESCRIBED FINNISH RADIO AND TV AS BIASED, NOT ONLY AGAINST THE UNITED STATES BUT IN ITS TREATMENT OF DOMESTIC NEWS, IN HIS COMMENTS TO THE AMBASSADOR LAST JANUARY WHEN THE EMBASSY PROTESTED THE SCHEDULED SPEECH BY A CABINET MINISTER AT AN ANTI-US VIETNAM RALLY ON THE DAY OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S INAUGURATION. THAT PROTEST RESULTED IN THE CANCELLATION OF THE MINISTER'S APPEARANCE. (HELSINKI 137)

4. COMMENT. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE TOO MUCH TO EXPECT THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO ADMIT PUBLICLY WHAT HE HAS STATED PRIVATELY IN THE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AREA OF MEDIA BIAS. IN ANY CASE, UNLIKE THE SITUATION IN THE MORE DISTANT PAST, WE SEEM TO BE OBTAINING SOME REDRESS THIS YEAR. MISSION AND FINNISH BROADCASTING OFFICIALS IN APRIL BEGAN A SERIES OF TALKS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE OUR RELATIONS IN THIS AREA AND OUR INITIAL JUDGMENT IS THAT WE WILL MEET WITH SOME SUCCESS.
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